

INCARCERATED PARENTS PROGRAM

Offenders in Missouri prisons and under community corrections supervision reported having 112,246 dependent age children. These children separated from their parents often experience feelings of abandonment, sadness and anger. Studies show that this population is six times more likely to become incarcerated themselves. To address the needs of this population and their families, Children's Division has partnered with the Department of Corrections, Family Support Division and other community partners. As of February 28, 2005, Children's Division provided services to 1,762 children whose parents were incarcerated.

During 2003-2004, Missouri Children's Division participated in a collaborative planning process with Family Support Division and other state agencies to submit a grant proposal for Implementation Funding for the Head Start Innovation and Improvement grant to provide a program which would Strengthen low-income families with children, throughout Missouri that have an incarcerated father or a father under supervision of the Board of Probation and Parole. The grant was awarded implementation funding effective July 1, 2005.

In 2001, Missouri Children's Division participated in a collaborative planning process for Children of Incarcerated Parents. This planning process was designed to identify gaps in services to children with an incarcerated parent and to recommend plans for closing those gaps. With numerous agencies involved in serving the various needs of these children and their families, specific attention was paid to integrating newly designed services with the existing network of services in order to avoid duplication and expand the current scope of services.

Children's Division staff currently visits the Women's Eastern Reception Diagnostic and Correctional Center to provide information to incarcerated women about the Adoption Safe Family Act, an act which supports and promotes safety and permanence for children who have been abused or neglected. This is an effort to keep mothers connected to their children while they are incarcerated as well as to prevent termination of parental rights, by providing the mothers with information about their rights and their responsibilities for their children who are in foster care.

CD serves on the Children's Service Commission Task force, Children of Incarcerated Parents Committee. The purpose of this task force is to review and study the effects of incarceration on the children of individuals in the custody of the Missouri Department of Corrections.